



# THE SYMBOLOGY OF DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS.

## BLACK

The color black is used on the altars to represent the Land of the Dead. The Prehispanic religions are also represented by this color. It is used more as a background color and is not usually as prevalent as the other colors on the altars or on decorations.

## PURPLE

Purple comes from the Catholic calendar. It is used to show the pain, suffering, grief, and mourning which goes along with death and acknowledges the loss of loved ones.

## PINK

This color is used to show the celebration that this time of year brings. Many times the skeletons and skulls are decorated with this color, since the souls of the dead are able to meet with the ones they left behind, which creates joy as well as sadness.

## WHITE

White is used on the altars and other decorations to show purity and hope. This purity and renewal is as though to show that the deceaseds' souls have been wiped clean.

## YELLOW & ORANGE

The colors yellow and orange are both used in this holiday to represent marigolds, the sun, and light. Marigolds are the flowers of the dead and are thought to help the deceased find their way back home due to their strong scent and bright colors.

## RED

The color red is used to represent blood. To Christians, this blood is the blood of Jesus, while to the Indigenous people and religions it represents the life blood of humans and animals.

## SALT

The purpose of the salt on the altar is to season the food placed on the altar and also for purification.

## BREAD

The bread on the altar represents the food that is needed for survival and is an offering to the deceased.

## WATER

Water is placed on the altars to quench the thirst of the deceased after their journey home and for purification.



# HISTORY OF DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS.

Three thousand years ago, Mayan and Aztec Indians displayed skulls to show their feelings on life and death. To the Aztecs life was a dream, and death was waking up. When the Spaniards arrived in Central and South America, Catholic and Native customs were combined into Día de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead).

When the Spanish and native people of Mexico came to San Diego in the late 1700s, they brought the Day of the Dead traditions with them.

# DAY OF THE DEAD OFRENDAS.

Families create special altars for their departed loved-ones on the Day of the Dead. These beautiful altars are like scrapbooks, with pictures of that person and some of their favorite things. These things are called ofrendas, or offerings.

Other decorations, like sugar skulls, flowers, and candles, are also placed on the altar in hopes that the dead will be able to enjoy them.

Do you know someone who has died?

What special things would you place on their altar?

# HISTORICAL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS.

Day of the Dead in early San Diego was a quieter occasion. People dressed in black walked slowly and quietly to the chapel with lighted candles to honor the dead. Today, people in Old Town still remember their ancestors by building altars to honor them.

Day of the Dead is celebrated each year on November 1st and 2nd. On these days it is believed the dead journey back from the beyond to visit the living. Special things are prepared, breads are baked, and flowers are collected to place on the altars.